



The Family Liaison Office

Family Member Employment

How to Work a Job Fair

The Resume Question

I am confused. On the one hand I am told that I should target my resume to every position I apply for. On the other, I am instructed to bring multiple copies of my resume to hand out to the many prospective employers at job fairs. These two sets of advice seem to conflict.

The Response

Though, whenever possible, you will want to target your resume to any job that you are applying for, you should always have a generic copy of your resume on hand, and bring copies of this resume with you to any job fair you attend.

Employers attend job fairs to fill not only immediate but also anticipated job openings. Also, contractors, both government and private sector, may need your resume in order to bid on contracts. Some would see this as a resume collection effort only and resent that their resume is being used to bid on a contract that they may never have the opportunity to work on. Keep in mind, however, that in order for a company to bid on and be awarded a contract it is necessary to show that they have a ready pool of qualified workers to tap into. And, if they don't get the contract you are certainly not going to get the job.

If it is an organization that you would be interested in working with, even if they do not have immediate openings, providing a generic copy of your resume will allow you to be considered for future openings.

However, If an organization is recruiting for a specific position that you are particularly interested in ask if you can forward them a copy of your resume. No need to be coy about this, they know the game. Tell the representative that you would like to tailor your resume so that it will contain the information that they need to determine if you would be considered as a potential candidate for the position. Remember to ask for a copy of the representative's business card if they don't offer you one. Follow up as soon as possible afterward by forwarding a cover letter with a note thanking them for their time and the copy of your resume.

*Be sure that your resume is in good shape and up-to-date.

40 employers ÷ 3 hours = ???

I am feeling overwhelmed. There will be so many organizations represented at the fair. How do I make the most of my time?

Response

Do your homework. Although one of the purposes of a job fair is also to allow you to gain information about an organization, you should also take the time, whenever possible, to do some basic research about the organizations that will be represented at the fair. These days all but the very smallest companies usually have their own websites from which information can be gleaned. Looking at this information should give you a general idea about the type of work that an organization does and the kind of opportunities that may be available with them.

Job Fairs allow you to gain access to representatives from a variety of organizations. The best course of action to make the most of your time is find out which organizations will be at the fair and to make an ordered list of who you would most like to talk to.

So many people so little time

Given the large number of people that will be at the fair it seems I will only have a few minutes to talk to any one representative. How can I make the best use of this time?

- First do be cognizant of the fact that even though you may have waited some time to talk with a particular rep that there may be others waiting behind you or that he or she may need a few minutes break after talking for an hour or more straight. Do not monopolize anyone's time. This will not leave a good impression.

*Arrive early so that you can talk to the reps while they are fresh.

- Second, prepare yourself. Take the time to formulate your marketing presentation. Clearly articulate your skills and focus on how you can benefit employers and help them solve their problems. Though it may sound strange as this is YOUR marketing presentation, don't focus on yourself. Keep in mind as you are delivering your presentation that the listener will be asking, what's in it for me? What can this person do for our organization? What benefit would we gain from hiring this person?

Do practice your presentation but avoid making it sound canned. To avoid this know your key points but don't memorize your entire presentation. Your presentation should sound effortless, conversational and natural. Use concrete, listener friendly language, and avoid jargon. Maintain eye contact. Also, consider incorporating a hook, something unique or compelling about yourself that will engage your listener and prompt him or her to ask questions, keep the conversation going and be remembered positively. Your presentation should evolve into a conversation in which questions will be asked and answered.

This is a good opportunity to practice your interviewing skills. Reflect on what you did well and what you can improve upon.

- Finally, record notes on your conversations with employers. Send a thank-you note to reiterate your interest in the position or organization. And then, telephone or email your contact within a week to 10 days to follow-up.